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THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE  
OF THE SAINTS.

A SERMON:

BY

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SPRINGHILL.

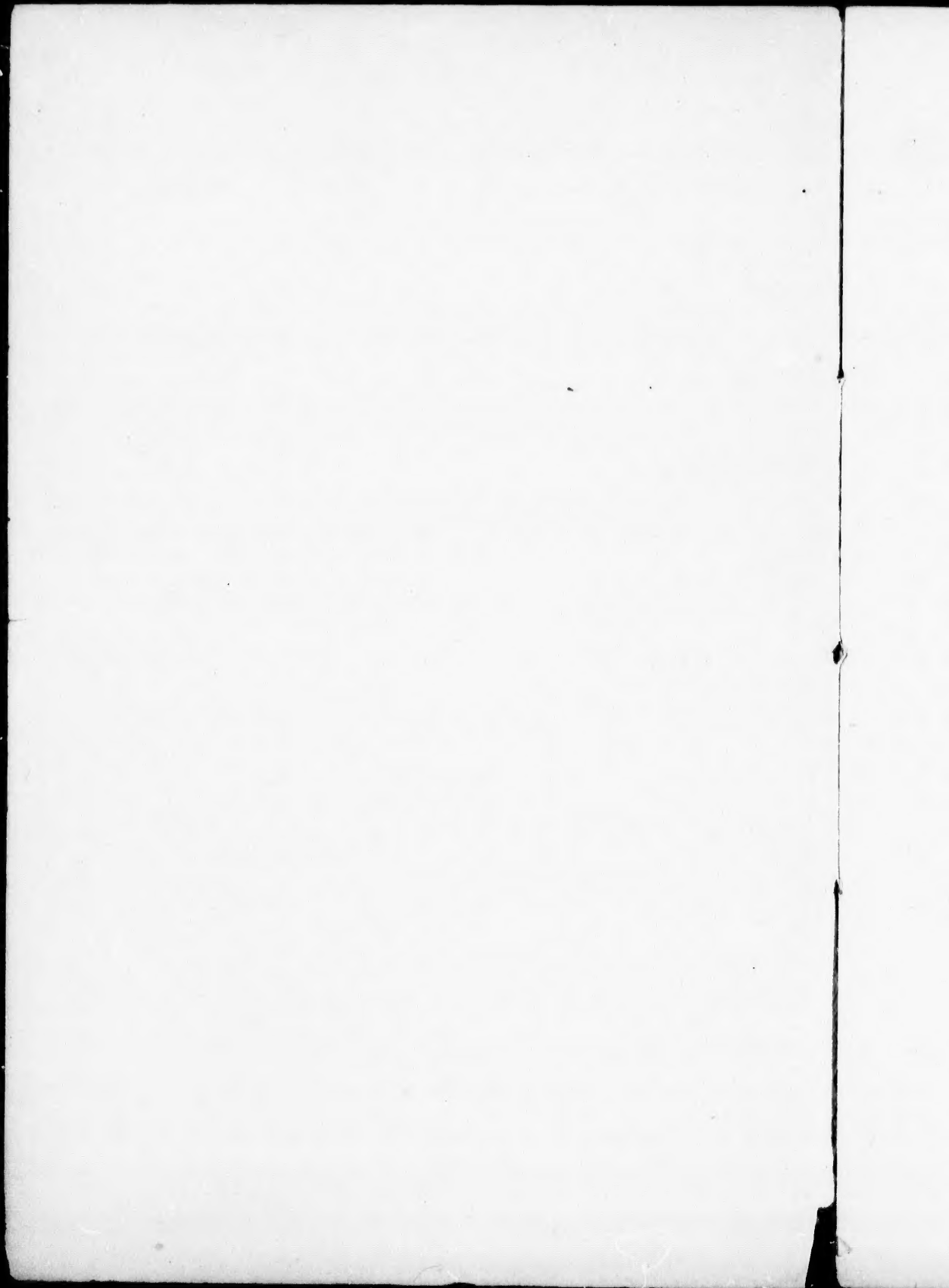
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## THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

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*"I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.—JOHN x, 28."*

It is abundantly clear, that, if God be what he is represented to be in the Holy Scriptures, the moral redemption of mankind must be no accidental or uncertain issue, since it is the issue of his perfections. When we contemplate the physical universe, we see no indications that the Creator is an erring, changeable, shortsighted Being, but countless and overwhelming proofs of the contrary. Laws that are absolutely fixed and unswerving operate from age to age; principles that are unchanged and unchangeable run through and connect all matter, form and motion; and the systems, and the worlds, and the seasons, and the light, and the heat, and the budding of a leaf, and the rounding of a dew-drop, continue in an order and according to a design that never at one moment or in one instance vary. The objects that are intended to be realized, whatever they are, *are* realized; the purposes had in view in the material fabric are evolved; onwards to the end to be accomplished all things unerringly and unalterably move; and we cannot imagine the constitution of things around us to be unfixed and uncertain in its connection, without the tremendous apprehension that the whole material framework and all that appertains to it might dissolve and perish.

Now it must be the same, if the God of creation is the God of providence and redemption, in the moral universe and in the moral redemption of mankind. In the moral world there must be the same certain, definite, and unalterable purposes, and the same certain, definite, and unalterable accomplishments of these purposes; and to suppose otherwise would be to suppose, just as in the physical system,

that the whole intelligent and moral universe might at any moment be convulsed and swept into wreck and ruin. If therefore there is a system of salvation for the lost race of men, it is necessary to believe, and, in consistency with what God is and does, we cannot but believe, that that system is governed by laws absolutely certain in their operations, and that the results in the salvation of men, their conversion and ultimate blessedness, are perfectly and unchangeably sure of being accomplished; and therefore that the doctrine of the text, the final perseverance of the saints, must be true. I say, we must suppose this, and it is utterly impossible to suppose otherwise, without totally contradicting all our knowledge of God and all the evidences that are multiplied around us, and without the terrible apprehension, that the entire and universal destruction of moral beings throughout the realms of creation might at any instant ensue. And yet you are aware that this truth has been denied, and that some have affirmed, that that scheme of salvation is uncertain in its operation and results, and that there is no guarantee that any men, that even true believers, will be secure of final and complete redemption. This false idea, that believers may fall away from grace and finally perish, has been held in modern times, and is still held, though after all in few and unimportant quarters. The true and Scriptural doctrine that God's people are safe, or, as it is commonly called, the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, has been all along held by the Christian church, was held by the churches of the Reformation, and by all who in God's hand have most largely moulded the religious character and destiny of the world. Let us consider this great truth, as it is here explicitly stated by our Lord, "I give unto them eternal life, &c."

1. It must be admitted and maintained too, as a Scripture truth, that those who will not repent and turn to God will fall away from such grace as they have had, and perish. There are thousands and tens of thousands who are perishing in this condition. Men and women will spend week after week, month after month, attending the means of grace, with the word of God in their hands and the way of mercy before their eyes, but they do not become Christians. They profess not a Saviour's name, they mourn not increasing sin, they hold willingly to a course of indifference and evil. It is perfectly clear that these persons, if they repent not, will lose all the favor of God,

and all the opportunities of mercy, and all the blessings of providence, which they have, that they will fall from them all and perish.

It must be admitted also and maintained as a Scripture truth, that some may attain to a high perception of the truth, and even be in the possession of high privileges in connection with the Gospel, and may yet fail of final redemption. It is possible to be a professor, and a very amiable and correct professor too, and even to have very strong inward convictions and emotions and yet not be really converted ; and if such a professor become more indifferent, and at length so entirely worldly as to cast away the very form of religion, his case is as hopeless as any on this side the grave can be. It is in this way that one or two passages are to be understood, which some, taking a very partial and superficial view of the subject, suppose countenance the false idea referred to ; though no one, who attentively reads the Scriptures, can fall into such a mistake. We refer to the following :—

Hebrews vi, 4, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away to renew them again to repentance ; seeing they crucify to themselves the Lord afresh and put him to an open shame." We do not need to take the explanation which some commentators, and perhaps quite properly, have given of this verse, viz : that the Apostle is supposing an impossible case, that he is making merely an hypothesis, that he does not say that the persons *would* fall away, but that if they possibly *could*, if such a thing could be (which it could not), there would be no more repentance for them. We can perfectly understand the words without this explanation, and in harmony with all the rest of Scripture. We can understand a man to be fully informed in reference to the Gospel, as this passage states, to have had strong and melting emotions in connection with Christ the Heavenly Gift, to have partaken largely of the influences of the Holy Spirit, to have cherished a considerable relish, for a time at least, in the Scriptures, and to have felt powerfully the tremendous realities of eternity ; we can understand a man to have passed through all this, and yet never to have been really and permanently converted to God. Judas was such a person. The stony ground hearers in the parable of the sower were such persons. Scripture gives us instances of professors of the truth, *apparently* as much

interested in it as believers, yet not truly disciples of Christ. The Apostle in another epistle says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, and have not charity," love, genuine love, to others for Christ's sake, "I am nothing." And in the passage here, he is therefore speaking not of genuine disciples of Christ, not of real believers, not of persons who really possess eternal life, but of persons who—though highly privileged and even gifted with religious attainments—never truly repent and believe. And there are persons in that condition in many if not in all of our congregations, and we have met with them. There are individuals who have had all the privileges and opportunities the Apostle here enumerates, and who confess to having experienced them; who know the truth clearly, who have been sensible of those emotions and tastes and desires and solemnities of feeling stirring within them, which Jesus and the Holy Spirit and the Scripture and eternity are fitted to awaken; and yet their hearts have never been won, and their lives never been surrendered, to the Saviour. Now if these individuals do not yield to God, if they willingly neglect the great salvation, if they fall away from these means of grace and all the constraining force of the Divine influences, it will be impossible to awaken the old feelings of repentance; their reformation is utterly hopeless, for by their rejection of the sacrifice of Christ they make another sacrifice, if that were possible, necessary, and thus crucify the Lord afresh and put him to an open shame.

Similar is that other passage in Hebrews x, 26, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." It was only the other day that I conversed with a man, one who is not a Christian, and yet as well informed in regard to the truth of the Gospel as most of those present. He has the knowledge of the truth, but his will is not given up to Christ. This man admits he is living a wrong course, he knows it, but he wilfully pursues it, wilfully sins. Here is an instance amongst us exactly of what the Apostle is pointing out. And if a man, knowing the truth, wilfully and deliberately sins, what remains? Nothing, he sins against the remedy, and, treading under foot the Son of God, there remains nothing but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.

Hebrews xii, 25, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God." It is possible, and it is too common, for an *unbelieving* man to fail of the grace of God vouchsafed him, to turn away from and abandon or lose the favor of God; and it is also possible for a believer to fall into sin *for a time*, and it is this doubtless that the Apostle means. He does not say that a *believer* will remain in sin, and finally and forever fall away so as to perish, and in numerous other passages he affirms the very reverse.

2 Peter ii, 20, 21, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning." Any one who examines this passage will see in a moment that the Apostle is not speaking of believers at all, but of presumptuous, self-willed, hypocritical transgressors, preaching liberty to others and themselves the slaves of vile lusts and passions. If such may for a time through the knowledge of the Gospel have abandoned the world's pollutions and again returned to them, their bondage would be more degrading and terrible than it had been.

1 Cor. ix, 27, "But I keep my body under and bring it into subjection, lest by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." If any one looks at the context he will see that Paul is likening the Christian life to the Roman game of a race, in which the greatest self-denial and the greatest effort were necessary to success. So, in order to reach heaven, it is necessary to give up evil indulgencies and passions, and deny one's self. Christ says so elsewhere, and Paul says so in this passage. And if Paul did not keep his body under, that is, did not subdue those evil indulgencies and passions, even though he preached to others, he certainly would be a castaway; and this selfishness and sin would prove that he never had been a servant of Christ at all. That is Gospel truth, and it applies to Paul and every one. But Paul *was* a true believer and servant of Christ, and therefore he would, and did keep under his body, that is, he gave up sinful sensual habits, and therefore he never would and never did prove a castaway, that is, he never would fall away from grace. These are all the passages of any importance on the point, and it is evident that none of them contradicts the grand doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, and which we now proceed to establish.



2. We affirm this doctrine from Scripture. In the passage before us we have the most positive declaration that is possible to conceive. Here our Lord is speaking of the sheep, for which as the Good Shepherd He gave his life. The sheep are unquestionably believers, all who trust Him and follow Him as their Saviour; we never think of questioning that; they are all everywhere who compose the Lamb's flock, truly loving and serving Him. Now Christ says He gives them *eternal* life; not a temporary, changing, uncertain life, but *eternal* life, "I give unto them eternal life." But it could not be eternal, if it were liable to be lost; it could not possibly be eternal, if those sheep, true Christians, might fall away and not inherit it; in that case he would give uncertain life. To say that Christ's people might, by any possibility or mischance or accident or event whatever, *not* enter glory, would be to deny that Christ gave them eternal life, for that means and can only mean spiritual, everlasting, imperishable life. If there were no other statements in the whole word of God, this would be sufficient to show that no believer in Christ can possibly perish, and to give every believer the comfort and assurance that he is forever safe. He may fall into sin, but he will not, cannot remain in it, because he has now a new nature, because he sincerely and really loves Christ, because he mourns for and turns from it, because Christ never lets him go, and has declared His gift to him to be eternal life. It is not possible for the gift to be lost, it is removed beyond the possibility of accident or peril, eternal is the life as is the Saviour of the Christian. Further Christ says, "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Can words be plainer, more explicit, more conclusive? The man who shuts his eyes to this statement might as well shut his eyes to the sun, and say there can be no light. There, as distinctly as language, human divine language, can state it, is the doctrine of the infallible perseverance and glory of the saints. They, His sheep, His people, for whom He died, "shall never perish, neither shall any man," in the original it is *not any*—not any angel, not any devil, not any being, not any power or possibility whatever—can pluck them out of my hand. The man, therefore, who attempts to deny the certainty of all believers' final salvation, attempts to contradict the Lord Jesus Christ.

But our Lord, in the following verse, adds "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them



out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." Here Christ distinctly declares that God, His Father, before whom all, the all-universe is nothing, and with whom He is one, has given *them*, that is, all who believe in Him, to Him, and no being and no power can wrest them from His almighty and everlasting grasp. The man then, who attempts to assert that believers will fall away and perish, attempts to oppose the omnipotent God the Father.

And our Lord in John xiv, 16, further adds, "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever," to whom the Apostle, speaking to Ephesian Christians, refers, when he says, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Here the Saviour distinctly declares, and prays to that effect, that the Holy Spirit would never forsake them but abide with them *for ever*, for ever, that is, through an unending duration, for by this Spirit they and all Christians everywhere are sealed, that is, made sure unto the very day of redemption, that is, the last and final day of glory. The man therefore, who attempts to deny the certainty of all believers' ultimate salvation, opposes the Divine Spirit.

And lest any one in any afterage of the world, or any minister forgetting or perverting the truth, should say or suppose, that it was only his twelve disciples that Christ meant, and not all true believers, all Christ's elect and redeemed ones, in every age, he declares in John xvii, 20, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one." The man therefore who ventures to affirm that God's elect believing children shall not all without exception finally be saved, or that any one of them may altogether fall away from grace, contradicts the word and opposes the work of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Three One eternal God himself.

And the grand truth thus announced is asserted and confirmed throughout the word of God; it enters into the very essence of the Gospel; it underlies its every fact, is implied in every statement, and breathed in every promise. 2 Samuel xxiii, 5, "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." Here is a saint of God, imperfect indeed, yet a saint of God, rejoicing in the everlasting covenant of grace, that is, never ending, never changing, ordered in

all things and sure, *absolutely certain* then of being fulfilled. Jeremiah xxxi, 3, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee; xxxii, 40, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Could the doctrine of final grace be more positively declared? Romans v, 2, "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Here believers are said to stand in God's grace, and rejoice in hope of ultimate perfection, but they could not stand in a peradventure, and rejoice in an uncertainty. Romans viii, 35, 38, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? I am persuaded that neither death nor life," &c. Here the Apostle asks, Who shall separate Christians from the Saviour? and says that he is persuaded, most firmly assured, that nothing in the universe can ever separate them. And yet there are persons who venture to say the reverse. Ephesians i, 4, "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." Here it is declared that ages ago believers were chosen to be holy and blameless, and predestinated to be God's children. If this is true, then it *is* true, and they *must* and *will be* and can never *but be* God's children. And the 14th verse, "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession." Here believers are declared to be *sealed* with God's Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest or guarantee of their inheritance above. There cannot then be any possibility of their not reaching this, for they are divinely and infallibly sealed or certified or guaranteed to it. Philippians i, 6, "Being confident of this very thing that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." The Apostle was *confident* of it, confident that the work would be carried on, and performed on the last day, and yet there are some who presume to say that the Apostle had no right to be confident, that he was mistaken, and that the work might never be

performed at all. We repeat other passages without comment. 2 Tim. ii, 19, "Nevertheless the foundation of God *standeth* sure, having this *seal*, The Lord knoweth them that are his." Heb. vi, 11, 17, 19, "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope *unto the end*. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both *sure* and *steadfast*, and which entereth into that within the veil. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show, &c." Heb. vii, 7, 25, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the *uttermost* that come unto God by Him." Heb. ix, 12, "He hath obtained *eternal* redemption for us." Heb. x, 14, "For by one offering He hath *perfected for ever* them that are sanctified." Heb. xiii, 20, "Now the God of peace make you perfect," &c. 1 Peter i, 5, 9, "Who are kept by the power of God through faith *unto salvation*, ready to be revealed in the last time. Receiving the *end* of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." 2 Peter i, 4, 10, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things ye shall *never fall*." 1 John ii, 19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they *would have continued* with us; but they went out from us, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." 1 John iii, 9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." 1 John v, 13, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have *eternal* life." From these and many other passages only one conclusion can be drawn, that the way of the Christian is not beset with uncertainty, and that all who through God's spirit are born again are born for evermore.

3. This doctrine moreover must be affirmed, if we consider any of the great facts in connection with the Gospel. Prominent before us is the eternal and unchangeable love of God going forth in the election of his own people. No one will attempt to deny that there is this election taught in the Scriptures. It is not merely election, but election *from all eternity*; and election, not because of anything good or meritorious in them, but *to good, to repentance, to faith, to salvation, chosen unto these things*. And we find the whole chain of

progress distinctly stated in the Epistle to the Romans, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called : and whom he called, then he also justified : and whom he justified, them he also glorified." They are predestinated and called, and the *end* of it is that they are glorified. If then God has elected them to everlasting life, which He has, they cannot by any possibility finally perish. If they could perish, then God did not elect them to everlasting life, but this would be contradicting Scripture. Election is there, election of God's people to final and endless salvation, and therefore that final and endless salvation can no more fail than God can fail. The accomplishment of it is not dependent on them but on Him, for He has predestined and determined it, and to say that He cannot or may not bring it to pass, what unspeakable wickedness is this ! God has said that it will be and cannot but be, for He has pre-determined that it will be, and if any man venture to say that it will not be or may not be, let him beware. To say this is to impugn God's veracity, it is to question His love and wisdom and omnipotence, it is to attack and subvert the Scripture itself.

Further, there is the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Christ. The merit of Christ endures for ever, and He ever liveth to make intercession for us. If therefore the merit of Christ is ever fresh, and the intercession of Christ ever prevalent, how can those for whom he merited everlasting life, and for whom He intercedes, finally fall ? Christ's work must accomplish the purposes which he foresaw and foreknew and determined that it should accomplish, and He foresaw and foreknew and determined that all His people should be saved and be with him forever. To suppose that Christ's people might finally fall from grace is to suppose that Christ's whole life and sufferings and death and resurrection and intercession might fail, and that therefore He might not see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. To suppose that any whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life are now lost is to suppose that Christ's purpose is defeated, that He was mistaken, and that He was an adventurer. In such a case there is no guarantee that any believer can reach heaven at all. They may reach it, but then they may not ; there is no certainty, and therefore they may be never there. Could any idea be

more insulting to the Saviour, and more destructive of the whole character and object of His glorious mission into the world?

Further, there is the continual abiding and influence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit brings us to Christ, and takes possession of us, and sets us apart, for Christ. If He can take possession He can *keep* possession, and if He *can* keep possession, for the honor of Christ He *will*. Christ himself says that He will, that He will abide forever, and that He will perform the work until the day of His appearance. How then can we finally fall away and perish? To think so is to deny the Holy Ghost Himself and to regard His whole work with every soul as a peradventure and a chance.

And further, there is the very nature of the Gospel and the Christian life. The Gospel is a work, a Divine work, as truly as any work we see around us. It is begun in eternity, it is carried out in time, and will be finished in eternity. Can we suppose that there is nothing definite about this work, nothing certain and sure; that it is all doubtful, confused, baseless as a dream? The idea is blasphemous as well as absurd, for it strips God of His attributes, and makes Him less trustworthy than a fallible mortal. And as regards the Christian life, how could it be, how could religion exist, if all the future of it were indefinite and uncertain? No one would engage even in any worldly business without some prospect of success. Would you open a store, or dig a mine, or build a ship or factory, or project a railway or canal, if you had no reasonable ground of its prosperity? If every enterprise in the world were just as likely to fail as to prosper, just as likely to fall through as to succeed, who would undertake any? And if it were really true that there was no certainty of any undertaking succeeding, if this actually were the case, the result would speedily be that no one would put forth any effort whatever. Progress would cease, society would come to a stand, the world would stop; and everywhere disorder, desolation, despair would reign. And if this is true in worldly things, it is still more true in the things of the soul, in the matters of eternity. If there were no certainty that by a particular course of conduct salvation would be secured, no one would attempt it. To read the Bible, to preach, to hear, to pray, to strive, to labor, would be useless and absurd, if after all the whole might fail. Why should there be means of grace in the world and the church, if nothing certain is to be secured, and all of us and any of

us may entirely and eternally perish? We may give them all up, because we have no security for salvation, and we ought to give them up, because it is a waste of time and effort. There is no use in professing religion, or becoming members of the church, because we are not the better or surer on that account. There is no use in religion at all. In fact this falling away idea would overturn all virtue, and all principle whatever. We venture to affirm that if this utterly false and unscriptural and God-dishonoring opinion were universally to be believed, the church, ordinances and worship, the Bible, Gospel, and religion would disappear from the face of the earth, society would sink into barbarism and idolatry, and the wildest, fiercest passions would ravage mankind. It would destroy everything, and cast the whole race of man, fallen and sinful as it is, on a sea of chaos, wreck, and ruin, with only a gleam of light here and there to break for a moment through the overwhelming darkness.

We have thus endeavored to shew, that the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints is expressly laid down in Scripture, runs through the whole word of God, and is so connected with all other doctrines, that if they are to be believed it must be believed : God's existence, attributes, providence, grace, Gospel, they all essentially hang together. We deplore the fact, if it is true, that the false notion of believers finally falling away from grace has been publicly expressed in this place, and that any of you have had the misfortune to hear it, and we trust that the statements now made may help to confirm your faith. This false notion, which some who profess to be Christians entertain, manifests very superficial thought and great ignorance ; but it is also most dangerous and destructive, for it strikes at the nature and object of the whole Gospel and all its great truths. It contradicts Scripture, directly assails the character of God, and involves the most wicked and even blasphemous assumptions. If believed in, it would render attendance on church an unimportant matter, and do away with church membership or confession of Christ, and this is its influence wherever it prevails. Indeed it has a direct tendency to shake all confidence in the Divine Word, in the object and faith of the Gospel, and with the most solemn and earnest voice we warn men against it. Scripture is clear on the whole subject. It declares the final salvation of all believers, and the necessity of all the means of grace to that end, for it is through them that this final salvation, according to God's



will, is to be secured, and not otherwise, and all true believers must and infallibly will use these means, and, using these means, attain eternal glory, to the praise of Him who has redeemed them with His blood, and prepared for them the inheritance that fadeth not away.

Let it be remembered, however, that this promise belongs only to the righteous, and none are righteous but those who have a living faith in Jesus, and faith in Jesus always produces holiness, and lead to the performance of good works. If therefore we are not doing good we are not holy, and if we are not holy we have not a living faith in Christ, and if we have not a living faith in Christ we are not righteous, and if we are not righteous we have no title to the promise. "Scripture nowhere teaches the salvation of professors but only of believers; it never says that professors shall persevere but only that saints shall. The doctrine therefore gives no encouragement to sloth, nor does it hold out the least comfort to the sinner, whether a professor or not. But it is full of the sweetest comfort for the weak, wavering, slipping, sliding, staggering and stumbling believer in Christ, for it tells him that he shall be holden up, because God is able to make him stand." It assures him that the grace of Christ is sufficient for him, and that as his day so shall his strength be. My hearer, are you righteous? Are you one of God's good men? Do you fear that through the temptation of Satan or your own weakness or instability, you shall fall, utterly fall? If so, take the encouragement held out to you in this sweet verse, and believe because God has said it, and said of every one that relies on his grace, "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand."

"If ever it should come to pass, that sheep of Christ may fall away,  
My fickle feeble soul alas! would fall a thousand times a day;  
Were not Thy love as firm as free, Thou soon wouldst take it Lord from me.  
I on thy promises depend, at least I to depend desire,  
That thou wilt love me to the end, be with me in temptation's fire,  
Wilt for me work and in me too, and guide me right and bring me through."